

Premises

Having attractive premises, well situated with good parking facilities can make all the difference between a successful thriving bridge club and one that just gets by. Members like to play in comfortable well-lit rooms, at an accessible venue in a safe location. This is, of course, the ideal and not always easy to find at a reasonable price in the real world.

So what exactly do you look for when you suddenly find that your existing venue is about to be bulldozed to make way for a new development? Here is a checklist which might help (not necessarily in order of importance):

- A good location that members will feel safe to go out to in the evening.
- A good-sized main playing area which can comfortably accommodate your usual number of tables and allow for some expansion. A square of 2.75m x 2.75m per table is the recommended minimum. Thus a space of 12m x 6m, for example, could comfortably accommodate eight tables (4 x 2), but remember to allow for any furniture, etc. which may be taking up some of the space in the room.
- Enough comfortable chairs.
Good lighting.
- Storage area/cupboard for bridge tables and other equipment.
Clean and tidy appearance – recently renovated.
- Accessibility for disabled.
- Adequate parking. Nowadays most players arrive by car. If they can't find anywhere to park, they may choose to play their bridge at a club with better parking facilities.
- Good clean toilet facilities. Good clean kitchen facilities.
- Crockery, or storage area for your own.
- Adequate heating in winter and ventilation in summer.
Accessible power points for plugging in club computer, etc.
Somewhere to hang up coats.

Other desirables:

- Good public transport connections.
- Good natural light if you play in the daytime.
- Extra room(s) for teaching, playing matches, etc.
- Bar facilities.
- Air conditioning.

- Well lit parking area and outside entrance.
Space for notices.
- Good caretaking.

Own premises

Most bridge clubs play in hired premises, but some have managed to acquire their own. This obviously has many advantages, allowing the club to have a permanent home with full facilities which can be left in place and allow bridge playing to take place every day along with teaching courses. The project is usually achieved by the club members banding together to finance the acquisition of an existing building unless the club is lucky enough to have been bequeathed a large legacy.

In some cases it may be possible to obtain a grant from an organisation such as [Awards for All](#). Obtaining charitable status for the club is likely to make it easier to attract grants and has other financial benefits. For more information on this subject, see article on [the advantages of charitable status](#). The EBU also has an information pack available – email bev@ebu.co.uk

A number of clubs have managed to have their own purpose-built premises designed to suit them. However, it is not always easy to find a suitable plot of land where the local council would be willing to give permission for a new building for recreational facilities. One solution can be to join forces with an extant bowls, cricket, rugby or other sports club which is looking to expand its membership. Such clubs often already have suitable land with good parking facilities where a bridge club house can be built onto the existing club house.

Another creative solution was found by a club where a nearby school was in need of an extra room for dance and drama classes. The bridge club funded the building while the school took on the costs of water and electricity. The resulting facilities are now shared. You do, however, need to ensure that you secure rights of use through a long-term contract.

Before taking on such a project, it is of course important to plan carefully, take professional advice and consult, where possible, with clubs which have already trodden this path.